

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2994

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, GW, WB

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SOVIET MOTIVATIONS ON FEDERAL
ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

1. SUMMARY: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE SOVIETS AR SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ACCRETION OF FRG PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN. WHILE THE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY PER SE IS PROBABLY NOT SO IMPORTANT TO THEM, THEY SEEM INTENT ON GAINING ALLIED ASSURANCES THAT IT WILL NOT SET A PRECEDENT. WE DO NOT THINK THE SOVIETS WANT A CONFRONTATION OVER BERLIN; THEY MAY THEREFORE BE AMENABLE TO A COMPROMISE THAT LIMITS THE PACE AND SCOPE OF FEDERAL TIES WITH WEST BERLIN. IF THEY DO NOT GET AT LREAST THAT, HOWEVER, WE WOULD EXPECT FURTHER (THOUGH PROBABLY AMBIGUOUS) INTERFERENCE WITH THE TRANSIT ROUTES. END SUMMARY.

2. MOTIVATIONS BEHIND SOVIET DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT OF FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY IN WEST BERLIN ARE STILL CLOUDED. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE SOME OBSERVATIONS ON WHY SOVIETS ARE PRESSING SO HARD AND ON HOW PERSISTENT THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE.

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3. WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT SOVIETS ARE SERIOUSLY DISTURBED ABOUT THE ACCRETION OF THE FEDERAL PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN. THEY TAKE AN EXTREMELY SUSPICIOUS VIEW OF FRG INTENTIONS REGARDING BERLIN, BELIEVING THAT INTER-

NAL POLITICAL PRESSURES ARE SO STRONG THAT NO WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT CAN AFFORD ANY COURSE OTHER THAN TO TRY TO PUSH THE FEDERAL PRESENCE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. GIVEN THIS VIEW, THE SOVIET NO DOUBT SEE THE FRG DECISION TO ESTABLISH THE FEA AS THE BEGINNING OF SALAMI TACTICS DESIGNED TO SET A PRECEDENT FOR FRG EXPANSION IN WEST BERLIN. (NEEDLESS TO SAY, THEY PROBABLY VIEW A BUNDESTAG PRESIDUM MEETING IN BERLIN IN MUCH THE SAME LIGHT.) THESE ARE, OF COURSE, THE SAME TACTICS THE SOVIETS ARE WONT TO USE THEMSELVES IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS.

4. WE SUSPECT THAT, AS SOVIETS HAVE OCCASIONALLY HINTED, THERE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DIFFICULTY IN SELLING THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT TO ELEMENTS IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP. IN HIS SALES PITCH, GROMYKO MAY HAVE PUT A RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION ON THE RUSSIAN WORD "SVYAZY" WHICH CAN HAVE THE WEAKER MEANING OF "COMMUNICATIONS," "CONNECTIONS" OR "LINKS" AS WELL AS "TIES." (YEFREMOV'S REFERENCE, REPORTED IN BERLIN 344, TO FRUIT IMPORTS AND VISTS TO BONN AS EXAMPLES OF "TIES" REFLECTS THIS NARROW INTERPRETATION.) SOME SOVIET LEADERS MAY HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH DEVELOPMENTS AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEA WOULD BE PROHIBITED BY THE QA. LEGAL QUESTIONS ASIDE, WE DOUBT THAT ANYBODY IN THE LEADERSHIP COULD ACCEPT WITH EQUANIMITY THE POLITICAL FACT OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS SPRINGING UP LIKE MUSHROOMS IN WEST BERLIN.

5. THE SOVIETS MUST ALSO, OF COURSE, LOOK AT THEIR BERLIN POLICY WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THEIR POLICY OF DETENTE. THEY CONTINUE TO VALUE THE BILATERAL PROGRESS THEY HAVE MADE WITH THE FRG. BREZHNEV HIMSELF, AS A TRAVELLER TO BONN, IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THAT PROGRESS; THE PRAVDA REPORT OF HIS FEBRUARY 27 MEETING WITH EGON BAHR NOTED THE REAFFIRMATION OF "THE DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THE PATH OF CONSTANT DEEPENING
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OF COOPERATION." AND THE SOVIET WOULD NOT READILY PUT PRESSURE ON BRANDT IF THEY FELT THIS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO A CDU-CSU RESURGENCE. STILL LESS WOULD MOSCOW WANT A BERLIN CRISIS TO DISTURB ITS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. MOREOVER, THE SOVIETS ARE CONSCIOUS OF THE LITMUS EFFECT THAT BERLIN -- THE SYMBOL PAR EXCELLENCE OF COLD WAR DAYS -- COULD HAVE ON OVERALL WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

6. WE BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SINCERE IN SAYING THEY DO NOT WANT A CONFRONTATION OVER BERLIN. BUT THEY WILL PROBABLY INSIST ON AN OUTCOME THAT ASSURES SOME LIMITATION OF THE PACE AND THE SCOPE OF THE

DEVELOPMENT OF FEDERAL TIES WITH WEST BERLIN. WE DOUBT THAT THE FEA PER SE IS SO IMPORTANT TO THEM, DESPITE YEFREMOV'S PROTESTATIONS TO AMB HILLENBRAND (BERLIN 359). WHAT THEY SEEM TO BE AFTER IS ALLIED ASSURANCE, PERHAPS ACHIEVED IN THE FINROMAL FOUR-POWER TALKS THEY HAVE PROPOSED, THAT FEA WILL NOT BE A PRECEDENT. IF THEY FAIL TO GET THE ASSURANCE, WE WOULD EXPECT SOME FURTHER INTERFERENCE WITH THE TRANSIT ROUTES. IN THE INTEREST OF AVOIDING CONFRONTATION, THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO KEEP SUCH INTERFERENCE AMBIGUOUS.

7. AT QUADRIPARTITE MEETING FEBRUARY 28, FRG DCM CONCEDED THAT BERLIN IS A PRIORITY ITEM IN BAHR'S CURRENT VISIT HERE. WHILE LACKING A FULL REPORT ON BAHR'S FOUR-HOUR MEETING WITH BREZHNEV, DCM SAID ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD BUT BOTH SIDES WERE FIRM. GERMANS HOPE GROMYKO, AS RANKING SOVIET EXPERT ON BERLIN, WILL RETURN FROM MIDDLE EAST BY MARCH 4 SO HE CAN SEE BAHR. FRG EMBASSY HERE IS CONCERNED THAT GDR WILL PRESS STRONGLY FOR REMOVAL OF FRG OFFICES ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN WEST BERLIN; DCM GAVE HIS PERSONAL VIEW THAT ANY COMPROMISE REACHED WITH SOVIETS WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO REDUCTION IN FEDERAL PRESENCE.
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